

---

# American Camp Association's **ACCREDITATION PROCESS GUIDE**



**American Camp Association™**



---

© 2007 American Camping Association, Inc. Printed in Canada. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher or the American Camp Association.

This book was previously published as *Accreditation Standards for Camp Programs and Services*, *Camp Standards with Interpretations for the Accreditation of Organized Camps*, and *Standards for Day and Resident Camps*.

ISBN-13: 978-1-58518-996-0

ISBN-10: 1-58518-996-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2006932373

Book layout: Studio J Art & Design

Cover design: Joyce Koeper

Front cover photo: Wyonegonic Camps, Denmark, Maine

Healthy Learning  
P.O. Box 1828  
Monterey, CA 93942  
[www.healthylearning.com](http://www.healthylearning.com)

American Camp Association  
5000 State Rd 67 North  
Martinsville, IN 46151  
[www.acacamps.org](http://www.acacamps.org)



**Margery M. Scanlin, Ed.D.**

For her years of outstanding service to the camp community, the American Camp Association, and her commitment to the Association's accreditation program, this book is dedicated to Dr. Marge Scanlin.

# Dedication

---

# Acknowledgments

These standards reflect the cooperative effort of many...

The members...who share ideas, suggestions, and yes—complaints. But all of this provides input for improvement. Members write, call, field test, and tell us what they want. These standards exist for them, because of them!

The delegates...who spend countless hours listening, reflecting, suggesting, voting, and sharing in the dynamic process of creating change and improvement.

The section standards personnel...visitors, instructors, standards chairs, committee members, and section staff whose incredible efforts accomplish close to 1000 visits, usually when they are the busiest, for they, too, are camp directors!

The National Standards Commission...a small group of dedicated volunteers whose commitment to excellence in standards causes all of us to stretch professionally. A list of the most current Commission members who served during this revision includes the following National Standards Commission members:

Cynthia Moore, Chair, 1999 - 2006

Peggy Adams

Jeff Beltz

Susie Davis

Nancy Garran

Linda Kotowski

Michael Peterson

Dave Silverstein

Stan White

The staff of the American Camp Association...and not just the staff of the accreditation department, but the whole group who share in the work, provide understanding support, and work together to accomplish what no one department could accomplish alone.

National Staff:

Wesley Bird, Ph.D., Director of Accreditation Standards

Kim Brosnan, Accreditation Programs Manager

Cindy Andrews, Accreditation Administrator

Margery Scanlin, Ed.D., Executive Officer, Research and Intellectual Resources

M. Deborah Bialeschki, Ph.D., Senior Researcher

Consultant:

Kathy Trotter

---

We also would like to thank the following individuals for their important contributions to this edition:

Pat Hammond	Sally Dana	George Marcus
Eric Nei	Gary Fawver	Eleanor Minus
Cathy Scheder	Pam Hawley	Barry Royce
Jody Winter	Caroline Lowsma	William Shipp
Karen Allen		

A special thanks to Peg Smith, executive director, American Camp Association, for her encouragement and leadership in the accreditation process.

To all of the aforementioned individuals, we give our thanks.

—WB

---

# Disclaimer

The purpose of these standards is to educate camp directors and camp personnel regarding practices and procedures followed generally within the camp industry. That purpose is furthered to the extent that the standards provide a basis for accreditation of camps by the American Camping Association, Inc. It should be recognized that each part of every standard may not be applicable to all camps. Further, it is not the intention of the American Camping Association, Inc. to attempt to include every practice or procedure that might be desirable for or implemented by a camp since conditions, facilities, and the goals or objectives of all camps are not identical or uniform.

The accreditation programs of the American Camping Association, Inc. are designed to be applied only to those camp programs that are consistent with the stated definitions and eligibility requirements of the identified designations. Programs outside of these definitions or criteria are not subject to our standards and are not considered for accreditation.

In developing and applying these standards in the accreditation process, the American Camping Association, Inc. and its sections do not undertake to verify the continuous adherence by those camps or directors to every applicable standard or guideline. Nor does the Association warrant, guarantee, or insure that compliance with these standards will prevent any or all injury or loss that may be caused by or associated with any person's use of facilities, equipment, or other items or activities that are the subjects of these standards; nor does the Association assume any responsibility or liability for any such injury or loss.

Further, the American Camping Association, Inc. hereby expressly disclaims any responsibility, liability, or duty to affiliated camps, directors, camp personnel, and to campers and their families, for any such liability arising out of injury or loss to any person by the failure of such camps, directors, or camp personnel to adhere to these standards.



Camp accreditation logo of the American Camp Association

The American Camp Association accredited camp logo is a registered trademark. Any use of the ACA signs, seals, and logos is a privilege reserved for camps that are currently accredited. Such symbolism represents to the public that a camp has met the criteria for the accreditation.

It is inappropriate for camps to advertise or imply that accreditation has been applied for or earned until notification has been received from the American Camping Association, Inc. indicating that all accreditation requirements have been met and verified by an on-site visit.

Any improper use of accreditation symbols or statements should be reported to ACA's national office and is subject to prosecution to the full extent of the law.

---

# Contents

DEDICATION .....	3
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	4
DISCLAIMER .....	6
AMERICAN CAMP ASSOCIATION ACCREDITATION CAMP LOGO .....	7
INTRODUCTION .....	10

- ❑ The American Camp Association
- ❑ The Accreditation Program of the American Camp Association:
  - Purpose
  - Eligibility
  - Content of the Standard
  - Symbols Protected
  - History and Development of Standards
- ❑ Administration of the Standards Program:
  - National Accreditation Criteria
  - Preparation for the Visit
  - Conduct of the Visit:
    - ✓ The Visitor
    - ✓ The Visit
- ❑ Evaluation of the Visit:
  - Criteria for Accreditation
  - Notification of the Accreditation Decision
  - Review and Appeal
  - Procedures for Revisitation
- ❑ Removal of Accreditation
- ❑ Using This Book:
  - Applicability
  - Differences in Levels of Some Requirements
  - Format of the Standards:
    - ✓ Standards
    - ✓ Mandatory standards
    - ✓ Does not apply
    - ✓ Interpretation and compliance demonstration



---

• Modes of Operation:	
✓ Day camps	
✓ Resident camps (including trip/travel programs)	
✓ Short-term residential camps	
✓ Rental or lease programs	
SUGGESTED RESOURCES	.23
FOUNDATIONAL PRACTICES	.25
MANDATORY STANDARDS	.31
STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION OF CAMPS:	
❑ SF-Site and Food Service	.39
❑ TR-Transportation	.69
❑ HW-Health and Wellness	.89
❑ OM-Operational Management	.121
❑ HR-Human Resources	.143
❑ PD-Program Design and Activities	.167
❑ PA-Program—Aquatics	.201
❑ PC-Program—Adventure/Challenge	.239
❑ PH-Program—Horseback Riding	.259
❑ PT-Program—Trip and Travel	.275
GLOSSARY	.299
APPENDICES:	
A. ACA Code of Ethics	.305
B. Annual Statement of Compliance	.306
INDEX	.307
PHOTO CREDITS	.316
ACA ACCREDITATION STANDARDS RESOURCE CD-ROM	.Enclosed

---

## The American Camp Association

The American Camp Association (ACA) is a community of camp professionals dedicated to ensuring the high quality of camp programs, a greater public understanding of and support for the value of the camp experience, and an increase in the number of children, youth, and adults of all social, cultural, and economic groups who participate in the camp experience. Established in 1910, ACA operates as a private, nonprofit educational organization with members in all 50 states and several foreign countries. Its members represent a diverse constituency of camp owners and directors, executives, educators, clergy, businesses, consultants, camp and organization staff members, volunteers, students, retirees, and other individuals associated with the operation of camps for children and adults.

The services provided by ACA include educational programs and conferences, accreditation services, networking, monitoring of legislation at the federal and state levels, *Camping Magazine*, public relations efforts, and an on-line bookstore providing educational resources related to camping, conferencing, and outdoor education. ACA also serves as a consultant and advisor to many state and federal agencies in the field of camping and to colleges and universities in the fields of outdoor education and recreation.

The programs of the Association are administered through numerous local sections. Members belong to the national organization and to a local section responsible for delivering services, including the accreditation programs. Section and national officers are elected by the membership and serve without pay. The organization is supported primarily by the dues and contributions of its members. Other support comes from conference fees, the sale of publications, project grants, and fees for services.

The ACA community of camps promote active participation, caring relationships, and focus on the emotional, social, spiritual, and physical growth of an individual. Camps vary in their purpose and desired outcomes, but each encourages risk taking, valuing the resources of the natural world, healthy lifestyles, and learning through a variety of fun and life-changing experiences.

Because of our diverse membership and exceptional programs, children and adults have the opportunity to learn powerful lessons in community, character-building, skill development, and healthy living. As a leading authority in child development, the ACA works to preserve, promote, and improve the camp experience. The Association is committed to helping its members and all camps provide:

- 
- Camp communities committed to a safe, nurturing environment
  - Caring, competent adult role models
  - Healthy, developmentally appropriate experiences
  - Service to the community and the natural world
  - Opportunities for leadership and personal growth
  - Discovery, experiential education, and learning opportunities
  - Excellence and continuous self-improvement

## **The Accreditation Program of the American Camp Association**

### **Purpose**

The American Camp Association is the only nationwide organization that accredits all types of organized camps. Many nationally recognized youth-serving organizations that have their own guidelines often require or recommend that their camps seek ACA accreditation.

The main purpose of the ACA accreditation program is to educate camp owners and directors in the administration of key aspects of camp operation, particularly those related to program quality and the health and safety of campers and staff. The standards establish guidelines for implementing policies, procedures, and practices. The camp, then, is responsible for on-going implementation of those policies. Another purpose of ACA accreditation is to assist the public in selecting camps that meet industry-accepted and government-recognized standards.

While standards primarily focus on health and safety practices, accreditation is not a guarantee that the camper will be free from harm. Accreditation does, however, indicate to the public that the camp administration has voluntarily allowed its practices to be compared with the standards established by professionals in the camp industry. At least once every three years, an outside team of trained camp professionals visits the camp to verify compliance with the standards.

Unlike inspections by state licensing bodies, ACA accreditation is voluntary. The ACA does not have the authority to close or otherwise penalize an entity not meeting its accreditation criteria, except for the removal of the accreditation status. Licensing focuses on the enforcement of minimum standards. Accreditation focuses on education and evaluation of camp operations, using standards that go beyond the minimum requirements of licensing.

---

ACA standards identify practices considered basic to a quality camp experience. They do not, however, require all programs to look alike. The ACA accreditation program serves a broad range of facilities and programs: some primitive, some rustic, others highly developed. Each will have addressed in its own way the concerns identified by the standards.

Many types of camps and programs seek ACA accreditation, such as camps that operate day and resident sessions, travel and trip programs, school camps and environmental education programs, and camps with special program emphases (e.g. sports, academic, therapeutic, religious). Many of these camps also offer facilities and services to other program operators.

### **Eligibility**

*American Camp Association Accreditation* for camps may be sought when operating programs and services on property owned by the camp or when operating on the property belonging to someone else. The visitation of the outside team of trained professionals is undertaken to ensure the camp's compliance with standards related to the campsite, program, and operation, and it must occur while the camp is in full operation.

To be eligible for *accreditation*, an operation must:

- Deliver camp programs and/or provide camp facilities and services for other programs consistent with ACA's mission of enriching the lives of children, youth, and adults through the camp experience.
- Submit an initial application and annual Statement of Compliance that indicates the camp's compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and permit requirements. The annual statement affirms the camp's continued compliance with all applicable mandatory standards and other criteria for accreditation as noted at the time of the visit.
- Pay appropriate dues and fees, as determined by ACA.
- Have an operating season with at least one session that is at least five consecutive days in length if a resident camp; or, if a day camp, at least five consecutive days in length or five days in not more than 14 days. The day or resident camp session may be operated by a site owner or by a group using another site's facilities and services.
- Be visited by ACA-certified team of trained professionals for accreditation when the camp is fully operational in its primary business. For most camps, this visit will occur during their summer day or resident camp program.

---

## Content of the Standards

Accredited camps are responsible not only for state and local laws, but also for those requirements defined by the standards. Those requirements include:

- ❑ *Site and food-service standards*, including provision of adequate sleeping quarters in resident camps, safe playgrounds, and fire and law enforcement protection.
- ❑ *Transportation standards*, including driver qualifications and training, vehicle maintenance, safety procedures, and the availability of emergency transportation.
- ❑ *Health-care standards*, including supervision of health-care practices, availability of first-aid equipment and personnel, the use of health histories and health-examination forms, and the use of recommended treatment procedures.
- ❑ *Operational-management standards*, including safety regulations, emergency procedures, and risk-management planning.
- ❑ *Human resources standards*, including qualifications, screening, staff training, and supervision of camp staff.
- ❑ *Program standards*, including activity-leadership qualifications, safety regulations, and procedures for conducting both general and specialized activities, such as aquatics, horseback riding, and trip/travel camping programs.

## Symbols Protected

The use of American Camp Association accreditation signs, seals, and logos is a privilege reserved for camps that are currently accredited. Such symbolism represents to the public that a camp has met certain standards. All indications of ACA accreditation are protected by U.S. patent and copyright laws. Any improper use of symbols should be reported to ACA national headquarters and may be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

## History and Development of Standards

Since the formation of the Camp Directors' Association in 1910 (now the American Camp Association), the leadership of organized camping in the

---

United States has directed many of its efforts toward health and safety concerns affecting camps. Following mergers with regional and specialized camping organizations, the name American Camping Association was adopted in 1935. In this same year, a listing of "Suggested Tentative Standards" was adopted. These standards were in addition to those being developed independently by individual agencies, such as the Young Men's Christian Association, the Girl Scouts, and the Boy Scouts.

In 1940, the executive committee of the ACA decided that the existing formulations of standards should be assembled, examined, and worked into a composite form that might represent a consensus of the camp movement. Grants from the Kellogg and Chrysler Foundations enabled this project to go forward, and in 1948, the first set of camp standards was officially adopted at ACA's national convention.

At subsequent conventions, additional standards and/or concepts related to standards were adopted:

- 1950 Personnel and program standards adopted.
- 1954 Methods of establishing compliance with the standards were instituted.
- 1956 Day-camp standards adopted.
- 1961 Travel and family camp standards adopted.
- 1965 A standards program that consolidated all the previous sets of standards was put in place, and the concept of prerequisite (necessary for accreditation irrespective of other scores) was adopted.
- 1968 A Standards Rewrite Committee was formed to thoroughly study the standards, utilizing research conducted over the previous few years with the assistance of Pennsylvania State University and the Fund for Advancement of Camping.
- 1972 The recommendations of the Standards Rewrite Committee were approved by the Council of Delegates.
- 1974 With the cooperation of the National Easter Seal Society, standards for the physically disabled were adopted.
- 1980 With input from state associations for developmentally challenged persons, standards for the developmentally challenged were adopted.
- 1982 With input from the American Diabetes Association, standards for camps serving persons with diabetes were adopted.
- 1984 A complete revision of standards for camp accreditation and site approval was adopted, consolidating all recently adopted revisions into the core document. The National Standards Board agreed to maintain this set of standards for six years, if possible.

- 
- 1990 A revised set of standards focusing on health and safety issues was adopted. In camp accreditation, items reflecting good business practice were placed in a separate self-assessment document.
  - 1992 Camp standards revised slightly to address concerns of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
  - 1993 Standards for conference and retreat center operations adopted.
  - 1998 ACA's Council of Delegates adopts a complete revision and restructuring of camp standards that combines the former camp accreditation and site approval standards into a single accreditation program for camps.
  - 2006 ACA's Council of Delegates approves the revision of several existing standards and the addition of new standards

## **Administration of the Standards Program**

The National Standards Commission is responsible to develop and administer the standards program of the association. Its members are selected according to defined criteria and operate within specific guidelines and procedures approved by the National Board of Directors of the American Camp Association.

The scheduling of visits and assignment of visitors is directed by ACA's geographical units called "sections." These sections are chartered by the Association on an annual basis and are responsible for the orderly local administration of the accreditation programs under the supervision of the National Standards Commission and the staff of the accreditation department in the national office.

### **National Accreditation Criteria**

The American Camp Association accreditation programs are national programs that utilize the local section as the implementation agency within the ACA structure. The minimum criteria for accreditation are established and monitored by the National Standards Commission.

Sections schedule and conduct visitations. They also approve accreditation for camps that meet the mandatory standards and the minimum score percentages established by the National Standards Commission and reject accreditation for camps that have not met at least the minimum criteria.

Sections do not have the authority to waive either the established mandatory standards or the specified minimum score percentages established for compliance. If a section deems that it is highly desirable to waive such criteria, such a request must be made to the National Standards Commission, according to the procedures set forth by that board.

---

## **Preparation for the Visit**

- ☐ *Step #1*—Apply by completing appropriate membership and accreditation application forms and signing the Statement of Compliance (Appendix B) that will be sent following the receipt of the application.
- ☐ *Step #2*—Remit dues and fees as described in current membership materials.
- ☐ *Step #3*—Attend the standards course offered by the camp's local section that explains the process and describes the requirements for accreditation. At the time of the accreditation visit, an individual must be on the campsite who has completed the standards course and has participated in the development of materials for the visit.
- ☐ *Step #4*—Prepare materials and written documentation required by the standards. Review and evaluate each area of camp operation, utilizing the guidelines in the standards.
- ☐ *Step #5*—Participate in the visit by a team of ACA-trained visitors who will spend a full day observing the camp and working with the director in the scoring process. This visit must occur when the camp is in full operation during its primary business season. Results of the visit will be reported to camps no later than November 10 for camps that were visited in the summer.

## **Conduct of the Visit**

### The Visitor

Visitors are volunteers with a background in camp administration who have completed at least twenty-one hours of training prior to conducting visits for ACA. They have also completed an “apprenticeship” with an experienced visitor. Many visitors are camp directors themselves. They understand the importance of accreditation and the scope of laws, regulations, and procedures of camps.

### The Visit

Accreditation visits occur on a typical program day (not the opening or closing day of a camp session), and generally require a full day. Visitors often arrive at camp during or shortly after breakfast and spend the morning touring, observing, and learning about the camp.

During the visitation process, visitors will observe living areas including sleeping accommodations for campers, groups, and staff; food preparation and dining



---

areas; aquatic activity areas; health care areas; garbage and rubbish disposal areas; maintenance and fuel storage areas; and activity areas. During this observation, visitors should have an opportunity to interview staff and campers and observe program activities in action.

Once this thorough tour of the camp is complete, the visitors will meet with the camp director to determine compliance with each standard that applies to the camp. Written documentation required by the standards may be evaluated prior to the on-site visit or may be observed by the visitors at this time. The visitors will score the standards, based on compliance, as observed at the time of the visit.

If, during the visit, the visitors note that the camp does not comply with a mandatory standard, the *immediate corrective action* policy will be instituted. Applicable ONLY to mandatory standards, the *immediate corrective action* policy requires a camp to immediately correct the deficiency and document that correction within 10 days or accreditation will be immediately withdrawn (if previously accredited) or denied.

## **Evaluation of the Visit**

### **Criteria for Accreditation**

To achieve accreditation (or reaccreditation), the camp must fully comply with each of the applicable mandatory standards and attain scores of at least 80% in each applicable section of standards.

### **Notification of the Accreditation Decision**

Camps visited in the summer will be notified of the results of the visit between September 1 and November 10. Camps visited at other times of the year will be notified between six and eight weeks following the receipt of the score form at the national office. While a camp may be visited for accreditation during its first season of operation, accreditation is not achieved until action by the section board confirms that all accreditation criteria are met. The "accreditation year" is November 1 through October 31.

### **Review and Appeal**

If a camp fails to meet the accreditation criteria, it has the right to a review by the section to question either the overall accreditation decision or the scoring of a particular standard. Ultimately, this review may be appealed to the National Standards Commission. The decision of the National Standards Commission is final.

---

The review process will include the opportunity for a hearing before the section standards committee and full consideration of all issues affecting the accreditation status of the camp. These due process rights are fully described in *The Camp Director's Guide to Review and Appeal*. Copies of this document are available from the section or national office.

### **Procedures for Revisitation**

A camp may be revisited at any time, as determined by the section board of directors. Reasonable notice must be provided to the camp to have the opportunity to update any written documents required for the visit.

An accreditation visit is scheduled when:

- Three years have passed since the last visit,
- The camp was not accredited following the previous year's visit,
- The camp is a new applicant for accreditation; or

Revisitation may occur at the section's discretion when:

- The camp moves to a new site,
- There is a new owner,
- There is a new on-site director, or
- Other factors related to accreditation criteria indicate to the Board that a revisit is needed.

## **Removal of Accreditation**

Accreditation may be removed by the section board of directors under the following circumstances:

- Refusal to schedule an accreditation visit by the section when required by the aforementioned procedures, or
- The visit occurs, but minimum criteria established for accreditation are not met, or
- For reasons as described in the current Statement of Compliance.

The camp retains the right of appeal to the National Standards Commission in such circumstances.

## **Using This Book**

The ACA accreditation programs are designed to be applicable to all types of camps, including:

- 
- Camps that conduct seasonal or year-round operations
  - Camps that are religious, private-independent, government, or agency sponsored
  - Camps that serve small and large populations
  - Camps that offer day, resident, or trip/travel camp sessions
  - Camps that provide facilities and services to groups
  - Camps that have a decentralized or centralized program philosophy
  - Camps that are male, female, or coed
  - Camps that provide general or specialty outdoor programs
  - Camps that serve children and adults and those with special needs

### **Applicability**

The standards are intended to be scored for all operations and programs of the camp, *except single-day events*. For example, day and resident-camp sessions, weekend retreats, and overnight campsite use by groups are all to be evaluated by the standards. However, events such as single-day meetings, dinners, program events, or training sessions would not be considered in the standards-evaluation process.

### **Differences in Levels of Some Requirements**

Within the camp standards, basic minimum standards (expectations) apply regardless of the varied types of camp programs and operations. These basic standards, such as the provision of emergency exits in buildings and lifeguards for swimming, are to be applied to every camp seeking accreditation by ACA. There are instances where ACA standards and state laws or regulations may coincide. Camps should always abide by the more stringent regulations, laws, or standards governing their specific camps.

Other standards vary, based on who is delivering the program or services and who has the responsibility for supervision of campers. For example, the requirements for health information and supervision are different when the camp is operating a resident camp from when a weekend group uses the camp facilities to run their own program, since the responsibility for service may vary.

When user groups are responsible for their own care and supervision, camps need only advise groups of limited site-related or youth-specific concerns. Camps are not responsible for collecting health forms, leader qualifications, vehicle maintenance records, etc., in these circumstances. This directive is consistent with requirements under the law when the site owner operates in a landlord capacity.

---

To enhance the value of the accreditation program as an educational process, it is strongly recommended that the camp administration involve the staff in the preparation of materials for the visit and in the visit itself. The person in charge of each program area or mode of operation should conduct the evaluation of his or her own program as preparation in this process.

### **Format of the Standards**

#### Standards

Standards are easily recognized in each section within color-highlighted boxes. All standards within a section appear in the same color, with each section shown in a different color. Standards are distinguished by an alpha-numerical ordering system. For example, the Standard OM-19 indicates the 19th standard in the Operational Management section.

Standards may be composed of multiple components which are usually indicated by a bulleted list. All components must be satisfied and are scored as an aggregate. For example, Standard HW-13 has four components, but each component must be met for the standard to be in compliance.

In some instances, there may be more than one standard under the same number and heading, with each standard identified with a capital letter appended to the primary standard number. For example, under SF-1, Emergency Exits, there are two standards—labeled Standard SF-1A and Standard SF-1B. Each standard, although under the same heading, is scored independently.

#### Mandatory Standards

Some standards are designated as MANDATORY. The word MANDATORY is highlighted in the margin next to the standard. If the word "ALL" is indicated below the mandatory designation, then the standard(s) listed below the heading are mandatory. For example, both Standards SF-1A and SF-1B are mandatory standards under SF-1. At other times there may be only certain standards that are mandatory within the color-highlighted box. In this case, each standard is listed below the mandatory designation. PA-17 is an example where only Standard PA-17B is mandatory. Standard PA-17B is listed below the word mandatory. Compliance with mandatory standards is required for accreditation to be granted, regardless of scores achieved in other areas of the standards. Mandatory standards are listed together within this book and within their appropriate sections.

---

## Does Not Apply

Some standards may not apply to certain types of camps or be applicable to a particular camp because a specific program is not offered. For example, some camps may not use public providers, never have overnight trips, never lease facilities, as well as other exclusions. The “does not apply” designation may appear in the margin beside the standard, within the standard, or may appear in introductory information at the beginning of a section or before groups of standards.

## Interpretation and Compliance Demonstration

Below each standard, three additional designated inscriptions may appear. The first is "INTERPRETATION," which will provide camp administrators and visitors assistance in understanding the terminology of the standard and its intent, as well as assistance in the consistent application of a standard in a variety of situations. The INTERPRETATION may help in determining applicability, defining terms, or locating other resources.

The second is "COMPLIANCE DEMONSTRATION," which identifies for directors and visitors the minimum expectation of the National Standards Commission as to how compliance with the standard should be determined. General guidelines for the Compliance Demonstration include the following:

- When indicated, written procedures/documents must be seen by the visitor when specified by the standard. Written procedures/documents shall be evaluated by the visitor to see that they contain the specifics required by the standard. Documentation may be reviewed as part of a pre-visit process or during the on-site visitation.
- Procedures or policies not specified in the standard to be in writing may be described by the camp administration or staff.
- The visitors' tour around the property will give them an informal opportunity to observe facilities, interactions, and the implementation of policies and procedures in camp programs.
- Standards required to be “in practice” or “rehearsed” are to be verified by the visitor through discussion or observation to ascertain that implementation has occurred.
- Programs, activities, and modes of operation not observed on the day of the visit are to be scored by visitors based on written documentation and discussion of the standard's requirements with appropriate staff.

The third is "WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS REQUIRED," which will appear if written documentation is required for the compliance demonstration.

---

## Modes of Operation

The standards are scored for all operations and programs of the camp, except single-day events and program areas that are not applicable. For the purposes of the standards, the following four modes are defined:

- ❑ *Day camp*: Sessions generally last for at least five days and sometimes much longer, and are operated and staffed by the camp. The camper goes home to parent or guardian each night, except for an occasional overnight.
- ❑ *Resident camp*: Sessions are generally for at least five days (four nights) and may be multiple weeks in length. The program is operated and staffed by the camp, and the supervision of individual campers is a camp responsibility. Campers stay overnight, and camp is responsible for campers 24 hours a day. Trip-and-travel camp programs are resident-camp programs lasting for three nights or more, often without a base location. Trip-and-travel program activities are based upon environments encountered as the group moves from location to location. Such programs run as an extension of resident or day camp or may be an exclusive trip-and-travel camp, specializing in only trip, travel, or tour programs.
- ❑ *Short-term residential programs run by the camp*: Sessions are generally three nights or less, run and staffed primarily by the camp, and include weekend retreats, short environmental programs, skill-training weekends, parent-child programs, etc. The camp staff for these programs is sometimes supplemented by adults from a participating group.
- ❑ *Rental or lease programs run by user groups*: This type of camp operation involves other camps, groups, or programs that rent or lease the camp's facilities, and perhaps some services, to operate their own camping programs or retreats. The group may even be from within the camp's parent organization. Examples of user groups in this category include most troop and club campouts, youth weekend retreats, outdoor education run by other groups, or specialty programs that operate their session at the camp's facility. The camp may supply some staff and services, such as lifeguards or food service, but the primary responsibility for camper supervision and general programming is with the group. The programs may be short or long sessions. The group utilizing the camp facilities and maintaining the responsibility for programming is called the user group.

To assist camps in determining standard applicability, the modes are identified in the margin next to each standard. If the mode appears for any of the four stated modes, the standard MAY apply to the camp for that mode. If no mode is indicated, the standard does not apply to that particular mode of operation.

---

## **ACA Accreditation Standards Resource CD-ROM**

The accompanying CD-ROM contains resources and information that can help further support and assist camps in their effort to comply with the standards. Among the items included in the CD-ROM are forms, standard related articles, best practices, and web links that point to up-to-date industry standards or advice, authoritative bodies, and current research.

## **Foundational Practices**

Additional practices accepted by camp professionals as basic to camp operation, but which are not currently included in the requirements of the standards, are addressed in this section. The intent of this section is to educate new directors about these practices, to remind experienced directors of professionally accepted practices, and to encourage annual self-assessment in these areas. Completion of Standard OM-1, Review of Foundational Practices, verifies compliance of this review.

## **Glossary**

The glossary contains definitions of terms used throughout the standards document. Terms that are limited in definition to a particular standard are defined in the interpretation of that standard. The standards are intended to be applied within the framework of the definitions as stated in this book.

## **Index**

An index is provided to identify the location of specific topics within the standards document.

